



U.S. CAPITOL  
*Visitor Center*

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**Capitol Visitor Center Celebrates One-Year Anniversary**  
*Statue of Freedom Placed Atop Capitol Dome 146 Years Ago*

WASHINGTON, DC – “One year ago today, the Capitol Visitor Center opened to the public, and we have been going strong ever since,” said Terrie S. Rouse, CEO for Visitor Services at the Capitol Visitor Center. “We are extremely proud of our exemplary staff, who have worked diligently since we opened not only to enrich the experience of the millions of people who’ve come to see the Capitol but also to make their visit more comfortable and convenient.” The mission of the Capitol Visitor Center is to provide a welcoming and educational environment for visitors to learn about the unique characteristics of the House and the Senate and the legislative process, as well as the history and development of the architecture and art of the U.S. Capitol.

Since opening on December 2, 2008, more than 2.3 million people have visited the Capitol, entering through the Capitol Visitor Center. This figure is double the number of visitors who came to the Capitol in the previous year.

Once at the Capitol, this year’s visitors encountered a greatly-improved experience which now includes an inspiring 13-minute introductory film about Congress and the building of the Capitol, and a fascinating 16,500-square-foot Exhibition Hall with rarely-seen artifacts and documents related to Congress and the Capitol. Visitors, who in recent years often waited two or three hours outside before entering the Capitol, now enter the building in minutes and can enjoy amenities that include a 500-seat Restaurant, two Gift Shops, and 26 restrooms.

New public programs also have also been added to the Capitol visitor’s experience. Throughout the month of December on Wednesdays at noon, curators, historians and educators from the Capitol, National Archives, and the Library of Congress will provide 15-minute talks about Congress and the Capitol. Lectures are free of charge, and reservations are not required.

Another new feature is an audio tour of the Visitor Center’s Exhibition Hall available by using a cell phone. The tour begins at the plaster model of the Statue of Freedom, located directly in front of the entrance to Exhibition Hall.

Another anniversary is celebrated on December 2 at the U.S. Capitol. On December 2, 1863, the final bronze section of the Statue of Freedom, sculpted by American artist Thomas Crawford, was placed atop the U.S. Capitol dome.

For more information about the Capitol Visitor Center, go to [www.visitthecapitol.gov](http://www.visitthecapitol.gov).